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25X1A9aAssistant Director, Research and Reports
: Chief, Geography Division
Near East/Africa Branch, D/GG

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Report on 1952 Summer Seminar on the Near East

1. Purpose

The Foreign Service Institute Summer Seminar on the Near East is designed to permit the study of Near Eastern history, politics and economics from a vantage point within the area. The facilities of the American University of Beirut are utilized to this end in addition to those of certain of the Foreign Service Posts in the area.

2. Program

The program for the 1952 Summer Seminar was divided into three elements consisting of two weeks in Washington, eight weeks in Beirut, and three weeks of extended travel throughout the Near East.

a. The Seminar convened at the Foreign Service Institute in Washington on 16 June 1952 for two weeks of briefings and orientation by members of the Department of State staff.

b. From 1 July until 25 August the Seminar was based at the American University of Beirut. Lectures by members of the AUB staff were scheduled from 0800 to 1200 five days a week. Addresses by local business and professional men and Foreign Service personnel were scheduled at irregular intervals. Weekends were devoted to group travel throughout Lebanon, and to Damascus and Jerusalem. Ample time was provided for individuals to become thoroughly familiar with Beirut and environs. The ORR representative spent 21-24 August in Cairo.

c. For the final three weeks of the course, 25 August to 15 September, the Seminar was divided into four groups of ten each. Two of the groups visited the Arab world including Syria, Iraq, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. The remaining groups traveled in Greece and Turkey. All groups visited Israel by way of Nicosia, Cyprus. Teheran and Cairo appeared on the original itinerary but were removed at the request of the embassies concerned.

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Transportation for extended travel was furnished by Attache aircraft with the exception of the return of the last group from Lydda, Israel to Nicosia, Cyprus.

The ORR representative visited Damascus, Baghdad, Kuwait, Dhahran, Nicosia, and Tel Aviv. Travel in the vicinity of these cities was possible in most cases, particularly so in the case of Israel and Saudi Arabia.

Briefings were arranged by the Foreign Service Posts in each city visited. The Air Attaches in Baghdad and Damascus made special air trips available to the group. The Arabian American Oil Company was most generous in extending the use of its facilities. The Foreign Office of the State of Israel provided a four day conducted tour of northern Israel.

3. Participants

Participants of the 1952 Seminar numbered 40 and represented State, Army, Air Force, and CIA. Two of the State representatives were Foreign Service Officers with assignments in the area. In addition to the regularly enrolled members of the group, an individual representing Rice Institute and one employed by the Sandpaper Press of New York City participated in activities of the Seminar while based in Beirut.

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4. Value to Analyst

This program is of great value to the analyst with an area interest in the Near East. No substitute is available for field contact in the area of primary specialization. This is particularly applicable in the case of the geographic analyst. This course provided an opportunity to observe Near Eastern customs, thought patterns, economics, and politics in a manner made possible solely through the intimate contact of living in the Near East.

The Office of Training made it clear to the CIA participants that the Seminar is primarily a training session, and that activities of the participants would be guided by that consideration. In addition, the cover provided and the strained relationship which existed between the Seminar and the American Legation in Beirut effectively curtailed activities other than those directly related to the Seminar.

It is suggested that the analyst could provide considerably more intelligence information to his Office if he were thoroughly briefed prior to departure. If proper guidance is provided, much information could be obtained by observation in a manner that would not violate the ORR objective and thus endanger the success of future programs.

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5. Suggestions for Future Seminars

a. The time expended at the Foreign Service Institute in Washington can be used to greater advantage. A more thoroughly coordinated program could produce more usable information in approximately one-half the time devoted to the 1952 program.

b. More detailed cover arrangements are required for this program. Those provided in 1952 were inadequate in numerous respects.

c. A briefing on Office requirements should be provided for individuals leaving the country for extended periods of time.

d. A project to be undertaken or a term paper in connection with the course should be considered prior to departure. Full and directed use of primary sources of information should be made while in the field.

e. Detailed suggestions for the conduct of future courses are being submitted to O/TR.

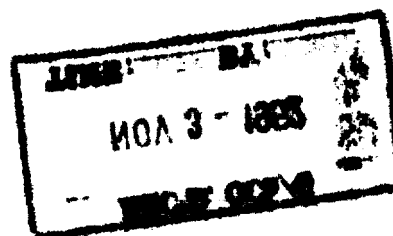
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